

**AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS:**

The following claim set replaces all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

- 1-9. (canceled)
10. (currently amended) A device for separating magnetic particles from a liquid mixture thereof, the device comprising:  
a sample plate defining a plurality of wells for containing a liquid mixture comprised of a liquid and magnetic particles to be separated therefrom, and  
a plurality of substantially aligned permanent magnets positioned relative to the sample plate so that each of the magnets is capable of being introduced into the liquid mixture contained in a respective one of the wells, wherein the magnetic particles within each of the wells are separated from the liquid and collected at the magnet therein, and wherein at least some of the magnets are inversely oriented such that magnetic fields are fixed between adjacent ones of the magnets to thereby locally define collection of the magnetic particles at each magnet introduced into the liquid mixtures of the wells.
11. (previously presented) A separating device as defined in claim 10, in which about half of the magnets are inversely oriented.
12. (previously presented) A separating device as defined in claim 11, in which substantially every second magnet is inversely oriented.
13. (previously presented) A separating device as defined in claim 10, in which magnets are disposed in several rows of several magnets.

14. (previously presented) A separating device as defined in claim 10, in which the magnets are united to form one single piece.
15. (previously presented) A separating device as defined in claim 10, in which the magnets are permanent magnets whose length/diameter ratio is at least about 2:1.
16. (currently amended) An apparatus for separating magnetic particles from a liquid mixture comprised of a liquid and the magnetic particles, wherein the apparatus comprises:
  - a sample plate defining a plurality of wells for containing a liquid mixture comprised of a liquid and magnetic particles to be separated therefrom, and
  - a vertically movable separating device which comprises a magnet head including several substantially aligned permanent magnets positioned relative to the sample plate so that each of the magnets is capable of being introduced into the liquid mixture contained in a respective one of the wells, wherein the magnetic particles within each of the wells are separated from the liquid and collected at the magnet therein, and wherein at least some of the magnets are inversely oriented such that magnetic fields are fixed between adjacent ones of the magnets to thereby locally define collection of the magnetic particles at each magnet introduced into the liquid mixtures of the wells.
17. (previously presented) An apparatus as defined in claim 16, wherein the separating device further comprises:
  - a vertically movable casing which defines a plurality of casing wells for receiving a respective one of the magnets of the magnet head, wherein

the casing wells are positioned relative to the sample plate wells of the sample plate such that each of the sample plate wells is capable of receiving a respective one of the casing wells, and wherein the magnetic particles of the liquid mixture in the sample wells adhere to a separating area of the casing wells in response to the casing wells and the magnets received therein being moved vertically as a unit into a receiving relationship within the sample wells.

18. (previously presented) An apparatus as defined in claim 17, in which the casings are united to form one single piece.
19. (previously presented) An apparatus as defined in claim 10, wherein the magnets are elongated, and wherein the apparatus comprises a support plate, and wherein the magnets are joined to and extend outwardly from the support plate.
20. (currently amended) An apparatus for separating magnetic particles from a liquid mixture thereof, the apparatus comprising:
  - a sample plate defining a plurality of wells for containing a liquid mixture comprised of a liquid and magnetic particles to be separated therefrom, and
  - a separating device comprising,
    - (a) a reciprocally movable casing which defines a plurality of casing wells each having a respective separating surface, wherein each of the casing wells is positioned so as to be reciprocally movable into and out of a received relationship with a respective one of the sample plate wells;
    - (b) a reciprocally movable magnet head which comprises a plurality of elongate permanent magnets, ~~wherein at least some of the magnets are inversely oriented, and wherein the magnets are~~ positioned so as to be reciprocally movable into and out of a received relationship with a

respective one of the sample plate wells, wherein at least some of the magnets are inversely oriented such that magnetic fields are fixed between adjacent ones of the magnets to thereby locally define collection of the magnetic particles at each magnet introduced into the liquid mixtures of the sample plate wells; wherein

the casing having the magnets received within respective ones of the casing wells is capable of being reciprocally moved into contact with the liquid mixture contained in the sample plate wells such that the magnet particles adhere to the separating surface thereof, whereby the magnetic particles are separated from the liquid mixture, and wherein the magnet head is capable of being reciprocally movable relative to the casing such that the magnets are withdrawn from the casing wells so as to cause the magnetic particles to be released from the separating surface thereof.

21. (previously presented) An apparatus as in claim 20, wherein the magnet head comprises a support plate, wherein each of the magnets are joined to and extend outwardly from the support plate.
22. (currently amended) A method of separating magnetic particles from a liquid mixture thereof comprising:
  - (i) positioning a sample plate defining a plurality of wells for containing a liquid mixture comprised of a liquid and magnetic particles to be separated therefrom relative to a separating device comprised of a reciprocally movable casing which defines a plurality of casing wells each having a respective separating surface and a reciprocally movable magnet head which comprises a plurality of elongate permanent magnets reciprocally movable into and out of a received relationship with the casing wells, wherein at least some of the magnets are inversely oriented such that magnetic fields are fixed between adjacent ones of the magnets to thereby

locally define collection of the magnetic particles at each magnet  
introduced into the liquid mixtures of the wells, and

- (ii) reciprocally moving the casing having the magnets received within respective ones of the casing wells into contact with the liquid mixture contained in the sample plate wells such that the magnet particles adhere to the separating surface thereof, and subsequently
  - (iii) withdrawing the casing wells from contact with the liquid mixture whereby the magnetic particles are separated from the liquid mixture
23. (previously presented) The method of claim 22, further comprising:
- (iv) reciprocally moving the magnet head relative to the casing such that the magnets are withdrawn from the casing wells so as to cause the magnetic particles to be released from the separating surface thereof.